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## NCAA basketball comes to Springfield

UIS hosts Great Lakes Valley Conference finals

BY AMANDA ROBERT



This weekend, as Jim Naumovich returns to his hometown, he'll bring the Great Lakes Valley Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments along with him.

Springfield native Naumovich is the commissioner of the GLVC, one of the country's largest National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II conferences with 16 members in five Midwest states. The University of Illinois Springfield, which last fall joined teams like Saint Joseph's College and Quincy University in the conference, will host the final four games of the two tournaments at The Recreation and Athletic Center on March 6 and 7.

Since the UIS Prairie Stars aren't eligible to play in the GLVC tournament during their first year in the conference, the three-year-old TRAC will serve as a neutral location for advancing teams.

"Springfield is the geographic midpoint between all of our schools," Naumovich says, "and we wanted to take advantage of

a new facility hosting our finals."

Tim Bramlet, the chairman of the Capital Area Sports Commission, says the GLVC tournaments are the first of their kind for UIS and Springfield. The commission, a group of 15 volunteers who promote and assist with sporting events that attract out-of-town visitors, has partnered with UIS and the Indianapolis-based GLVC. They're providing beverages for players and officials, as well as securing hotels, sponsorships and advertising for the event.

The commission hopes to impress the GLVC with a well-organized weekend of basketball, so the conference will bring its 14 other sporting events to Springfield.

"UIS becoming a member of the Great Lakes Valley Conference sets the table for a lot of activities like this in the future," Bramlet says. "This is our first shot out of the box, and we're trying to put on a good show, not just for UIS, but for Springfield."

According to the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau, the GLVC tournaments will contribute at least \$100,000 to the capital city's economy. Gina Gemberling, the SCVB director of sales, says that figure is based on the number of players and coaches coming to Springfield — it doesn't include the economic impact of visiting spectators.

In addition to attracting out-of-town visitors, Naumovich also hopes the GLVC will draw the interest of local basketball fans. Now that UIS has joined the conference, he says, they have a chance to see high-level NCAA Division II competition.

Scott Reed, the assistant athletic director at UIS, agrees that the GLVC tournaments will introduce both Springfield visitors and natives to better quality basketball.

"This is the chance firsthand to see the best of the best," Reed says. "We have a brand-new athletic facility here, so we can showcase that a little bit."

Kentucky Wesleyan College, Northern Kentucky University, Drury University and Bellarmine University will battle for the men's title, while the University of Indianapolis, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Drury University and Lewis University will compete for the women's championship. Teams will play in the semifinals Saturday, with winners moving on to the finals Sunday. Champions automatically advance to the NCAA Division II National Tournament.

Reserved seating is \$12 and general admission seating is \$10. Discounted student and youth rates, as well as all-tournament passes, are also available.

Call UIS at 206-7017 for more information.

Contact Amanda Robert at [arobert@illinoistimes.com](mailto:arobert@illinoistimes.com).